#1 Time on task
Genuine learning takes time and cannot be rushed. Efficiency is about eliminating waste (e.g., by not doing unnecessary things); it is not about taking short cuts. It is often stated that learning course material requires 2-3+ hours outside of class for every hour in class, but exactly how much time it will take you to learn something depends on variables including your learning goals, your existing knowledge or familiarity with the subject, the volume, density and complexity of the information, your individual learning preferences/style, as well as the study methods and behaviors you employ. Learning is a very individual process; it may take you longer than your peers to master the material.

Answer honestly, "Am I giving this material the time it deserves?"

#2 Attention during task
Getting information into short-term memory and from there into long-term memory requires that you be present and focused while studying. No amount of time on task is going to be effective if your attention is directed elsewhere (e.g., multitasking, distractions, sleepiness, anxiety, negative thoughts, etc.).

Answer honestly, "While I'm studying, am I giving the material the attention it deserves?"

#3 Study methods & strategies
Not all study methods and strategies are created equal. Furthermore, a study method that works for one subject or type of material may not be appropriate for other topics. It is important to have a learning “toolbox”—be adept at using a variety of study methods and strategies—and to be flexible and adaptive. Your individual learning “style” (preferences for how you learn) can help or hinder you depending on whether or not they are a good “match” for what you are learning.

Answer honestly, "Am I approaching this material in the appropriate way?"

#4 State of mind
Your attitude toward studying and learning, as well as, your overall emotional state can strongly influence your ability to process, retain, and apply information. Not surprisingly, enjoyment of learning and positive emotions, such as happiness, pride, and gratitude, are correlated with improved retention and creative problem solving, while negative emotions (fear, resentment, anger, sadness) are associated with rote learning and reduced performance. Healthy behaviors related to stress management, recreation, adequate sleep, good nutrition, exercise, socializing, personal development and spirituality can help you develop and maintain a positive attitude.

Answer honestly, “Do I have a positive attitude, and if not, what can I do to improve it?”

#5 Metacognition
Metacognition means “thinking about thinking.” It is a mental process of self-reflection and analysis that, among other things, helps determine if one’s actions are working to achieve the desired outcome. Thinking about the sorts of questions mentioned above involves metacognition.

While studying, be sure to take the time to reflect on the following sorts of questions, "Is what I am doing working?" "Do I know / understand this?" “Should I change my approach?”